

Cuba

PERS. Page, William R.

—ORF 1: OAS

ECON 3-03 Cuba

# Effect of Any OAS Action On Cuba Held Psychological

By WILLIAM R. FRYE  
Special to The Star

HAVANA, July 24.—The imposition of sanctions on Cuba by the Organization of American States will have greater psychological than practical effect, observers here believe.

It will be a blow to Fidel Castro's propaganda.

One of his principal slogans is "venceremos" (we will win). Except with the dedicated revolutionaries, every sign that Cuba is not winning serves to discredit the boast.

It will undercut one of Mr. Castro's psychological defenses—the thesis that his critics are a bunch of supine American puppets.

This claim will be harder to make persuasively with all but a few countries of the hemisphere adjudging Cuba an aggressor.

## Aid to Castro Foes

It will be a shot in the arm for Mr. Castro's opposition at home and abroad, but primarily abroad.

Their morale will be given a boost. They will have a new talking point. Latin govern-

ments which wish to co-operate with the United States in measures against subversion will be able to do so with less fear of domestic political reprisal.

But most of this is in the realm of intangibles. The real effect is hard to gauge. For example, it would take a lot of morale boosting—and other kinds of aid—for Mr. Castro's domestic opposition to become a significant force, able to challenge the regime.

Experienced observers believe the impact of the American "blockade," as it is called here—and of this latest intensification of it—can easily be exaggerated.

## Springs From Within

The disorganization of Cuba's economy does not come primarily from outside pressure. It springs from inefficiency, inexperience and incompetence within.

Communism with its centralized planning and its strict disciplines is utterly alien to Cubans, who are by nature highly individualistic and resentful of discipline. The attempt to impose it upon them has many disruptive effects.

Thus, the blockade is not considered a critical or decisive factor. Nor would it be, in the judgment of experienced observers here, even if the whole free world fully co-operated.

So long as the Soviet Union continues spending between \$1 million and \$1.5 million a day to keep Cuba afloat, the denial of free world trade can only be marginal in its impact, it is

counting other bloc countries. Total hemisphere trade with Cuba was in the vicinity of \$20 million in 1963, or less than 5 per cent of that of Russia, not counting other bloc countries.

Much of this hemisphere trade is in foodstuffs and medicine, which will not be affected by the OAS decision.

## Adds Little to Burden

Thus, even total compliance with the OAS sanctions resolution—which is considered highly

unlikely—would mean only a slight increase in the cost to the Soviet Union of subsidizing Cuba.

It probably would not be felt by ordinary Cubans. Their belts are already tightened so far that one more notch would not affect drastically their attitude toward the regime.

So this latest OAS turn of the screw is not likely to produce economic chaos, bring down Mr. Castro, or provoke or even facilitate a military coup.

Most observers doubt that any action within the power of the Western world can accomplish this, short of outright military invasion or a deal with Moscow involving Soviet abandonment of Cuba.

What the blockade is doing is giving the United States bargaining power for use, if it wishes, to make an accommodation with Mr. Castro. There is no doubt that both Havana and Moscow would pay a certain price—how much, no one knows—for relief from it.

Its effects may be seen in such things as the disruption of Cuban transport. Most Cuban automobiles and trucks originally were purchased in the United States. Denial of spare parts is producing a slow strangulation.

## Taxis Dilapidated

Take a taxi in Havana and you are never sure you will reach your destination. I rode in one today that had such a severe shimmy the driver periodically lost control of the steering mechanism.

Doors frequently are tied together with string. Buckets

jammed under the hood catch water from leaking radiators. The streets are spotted with broken-down vehicles.

Repairs are either impossible or prohibitively expensive. An acquaintance of mine paid \$50 in the black market for a fan belt. A Cuban clerk may make just over \$200 a month.

Whether this kind of thing makes Mr. Castro unpopular is not clear. With some elements of the population it obviously does.

But others—including some severe critics of the government—say it simply gives the Fidelistas a convenient excuse for their shortcomings. Almost anything can be blamed on the blockade.

Mr. Castro also seeks to turn the blockade to his advantage in another way, and will certainly do so in response to the OAS decision.

He exploits a sense of beleaguement—a feeling of being under siege—to rally support. Cuba is full of belligerent posters crying "If they force war on us we will fight," "Fatherland or death," and "Commander in chief, give us your orders."

The OAS vote can be used to lend added credibility to the war atmosphere and to Mr. Castro's demand for unity in the face of the challenge.